

Cambridge, Feb. 28, 1850. ^{Harris}

Dr. A. Gray.
Dear Sir.

Mr. Lowell's books have arrived, and I am well pleased with them. They are valuable works, such as ought to be found in our Library. The monograph of Oxalis has some forms new to me, suggesting analogies that once it would have pleased me to trace further.

In 1833 or 1834, Dr. A. G. Amherst, then resident at Savannah, gave me a lot of seeds of native plants grown in his own garden. Among them were seeds of Hibiscus Carolinianus, supposed to have been lost till he rediscovered the species on Wilmington Island, and restored it to science; also, the seeds of a supposed new species, to which I requested Mr. Nuttall & Mr. Carter (to whose care I committed the whole collection) to give the name of Hibiscus Amhersti, until ~~it~~ the species should prove to be entitled to some older name.

After an absence in Europe of several years duration, Dr. Amherst has returned to Savannah to live. But he has come back to find his house burnt, and his garden laid waste. Not a vestige now remains in it of the native plants that he had collected & cultivated with so much care. He has looked for his lost favorites in the neighboring gardens in vain; and has explored the places where he once found them growing wild without success; for the so-called hand of improvement has appropriated their native haunts, and has rooted them all out.

I sincerely sympathise with him in his disappointment, having experienced something of the same kind here. More than twenty of the rare and fine plants that once flourished in secluded spots in this neighborhood, well-known to me, and so accessible, that, in an early morning's walk, I could always find them for my lectures, in their season, have since been exterminated. (See some of these named in Hovey's Mag. Vol. 6. 246-7.)

But to return to my friend. In his distress, he applied for supplies to gardeners at Philadelphia & at Long Island, - where he had distributed seeds; but was informed that none were to be had; and he has now written to me, to beg the same favor. He adds also, that if our garden produces "any seeds of Pentapetes and Urena", he "shall be greatly obliged for a few grains."

I know that there were once growing, in the garden, plants of the two before-named species of Hibiscus from Dr. Emmer's sendings; and Mr. Carter informs me that H. Emmeri was there when he left the place. This being the case, I have the hope that you may be able and willing to comply with Dr. Emmer's request, if not now, in the course of the coming summer, when the plants have blossomed & gone to seed. If, by good chance, you happen to have on hand, now, good seeds of these plants, will you favor me with a very few of each, to be sent in a letter to Dr. Emmer? If, however, none have been saved, can you hold out any encouragement for a supply to my friend hereafter?

Please to let me know soon, as the Doctor's letter must be answered by

yours,
Thaddeus W. Harris.

P. S. Perhaps it may interest you to see the names of some of our lost plants, as it may suggest some worthy of preservation in the garden. I put them down just as I happen to recollect them, & without regard to arrangement or modern nomenclature.

Rhodora Canadensis - formerly abundant in low grounds east of the Colleges - now all gone, unless perhaps a starved plant or two may still lurk in Prof. Norton's grounds; - Viola acuta, Big.; Viola debilis, Mx.; Archispectabilis; Clintonia borealis (which I introduced in the garden from the meadows near Wellington Hill, where it no longer exists); Sanguinaria Canadensis; Anilacina trifolia; Dentaria diphylla; Corallorhiza verna; Cypripedium acaule; Smeynium aureum; Andromeda calyculata, & Andr. paniculata (almost if not quite rooted out); Gentiana crinita; Hepatica triloba (now only, at Mt. Auburn, taboored ground); Clethra alnifolia, almost extinct near the Colleges, but to be found elsewhere & farther off; so also of Rhus virginica; Cassia chamaecrista very rare now; Hibiscus palustris; Bartsia coccinea; Comarum palustre; Medeola virginica (almost if not quite extinct in its former haunts); Triosteum perfoliatum (now only, at Mt. Auburn); Dieroilla Canadensis (only a few plants remain); Campanula crinoides; Mertensia trifoliata (gone where it was found nearest); Ilex Canadensis; &c. &c. —

The loss of such plants as these, in the immediate vicinity of the Colleges, is to be regretted, for it deprives the young botanical student of one of the chief inducements to the study, namely the pleasure of finding the plants himself.

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